

beneficial tax breaks that could have been included in this bill to assist those businesses most likely to be affected by the minimum wage increase.

Mr. President, because the Domenici amendment combines a \$1.00 increase in the minimum wage with tax and regulatory relief to offset the negative impact of increased personnel costs on small businesses and the economy as a whole, I would have voted for the amendment.●

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, for the leader, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for the transaction of routine morning business with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING VETERANS DAY

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, as daylight hours shorten and brightly colored leaves fall from the tree branches, we gradually descend into the winter season. The master hand of nature, after painting the hills glorious colors, leaves us with a chilly palette of greyer skies, leafless trees, and a long wait before the spring blossoms emerge from their underground bulbs. Although we may feel the bounce in our step that a crystal clear, crisp-aired fall day can bring, with the sun shining brightly as it makes its low arc across the sky, we are reminded during this time of the year of the cycles of the natural world. We are reminded that all too soon, we will be in the quarter of the year naturally suited for hibernation—a season, despite festive gatherings, associated with the death needed for renewal. During this season we celebrate Veterans Day to honor veterans who, with their death and sacrifice, have renewed and sustained the freedom and promise of our great republic.

Each year at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month we celebrate the end of the fighting in Europe in 1918 that ended the Great War. When I was a boy, we called this day Armistice Day in honor of the Armistice between the Allies and the Central Powers that ended the horrible trench warfare that had torn Europe apart. In 1926, Congress proclaimed that Armistice Day would be celebrated yearly with an annual observance of “thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations.”

After World War II, on June 1, 1954, Congress approved the Veterans Day Act that changed the name of Armistice Day to Veterans Day. I am the only Member of Congress who was serving in Congress at that time who is still serving today. Officially, on Veterans Day, we celebrate and recognize the sacrifices of our nation's soldiers, sailors, and airmen to protect our free-

doms during all of the wars and conflicts involving the United States. That same year, President Eisenhower declared that on Veterans Day, Americans should “solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us consecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so their efforts shall not have been in vain.”

From the beginning of our nation, America's sons and daughters have been ready to answer a call to duty. In particular, West Virginians have a proud enviable record of service to this country in the perilous times of war and conflict. Of the twenty-five million living veterans, one-hundred-ninety-thousand reside in the great State of West Virginia. More than ten-percent of the people of West Virginia are veterans who have served our nation proudly—that is more than ten of every one-hundred West Virginians. This tradition of dedication to serving is something I am proud of as a West Virginian. Through the turmoil and change of the twentieth century, one thing has remained constant—the dedication and commitment of our veterans to the survival and strength of this nation.

Largely through the might of our Armed Forces, the United States enjoys an unprecedented position of international leadership. Yet, the promise of lifelong health care that this country made to our men and women in uniform has been threatened, not by the aggression of a foreign power, but by inadequate funding. Caring for America's veterans is an ongoing cost of war. As America's veterans grow older, they require increased dependence on health care services. But, the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot be expected to provide the necessary care which veterans will need in Fiscal Year 2000, at the Fiscal Year 1999 level for veterans health care services. Veterans should not be expected to wait in longer lines, and travel farther for services. They must be provided quality service. If we fail in this obligation, how can we justify sending more and more young service members into harm's way? How can we expect our children and grandchildren to volunteer for military service in the future, if we are not prepared to keep promises to veterans today?

This year the budget came dangerously close to failing to provide for health care that veterans need and deserve. The Department of Veterans Affairs warned many veterans that they might not be eligible for veterans medical care services in Fiscal Year 2000. The strong need for quality medical care for veterans, and a sense of duty to these men and women who valiantly served, caused me to work very hard to meet the funding level for veterans' medical care recommended by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs—some \$1.7 billion above the Administra-

tion's budget request. I would like to thank my colleagues who supported my efforts to raise the funding level for veterans medical care to \$19 billion for Fiscal Year 2000. This level of funding will enable the VA to continue to provide quality health care to veterans, and will prevent the kinds of cuts in services that many veterans feared would place their eligibility for care in question.

As a nation, we are good about honoring our war dead, with memorial days such as Veterans Day, and with memorials of stone that dot our capital and other towns and cities across the country. We need to be as good to our living veterans. Today, many of our veterans are still affected by the time they spent in service. We can best honor them by continuing to provide a high quality of medical care. We can also honor our veterans by continuing to search for answers to questions of service-related injury, and by providing for those who have experienced such injuries. We must also work to prevent such injuries from recurring. For instance, we must remain committed to pin-pointing the cause of the illness of Gulf War Syndrome. Recent reports issued by the Department of Defense indicate that certain substances our military men and women were directed to take during their service in the Gulf War cannot be ruled out as causes for this syndrome. We must continue to focus our attention on narrowing in on the cause of the symptoms experienced by more than one-hundred thousand Gulf War Veterans.

So, this year on Veterans Day, let us reflect on the men and women who have valiantly served our Nation, both living and dead. Upon reflection, we should realize the need to recommit ourselves to honoring veterans, not only with unfurled flags and patriotic up-tempo marches but also by serving them as they have served our nation. As the leaves fall from the trees, and our veterans age and pass on, we must remember that what has always kept the tree of liberty safe and strong through the frost and chill of many brutal winters is the commitment of our veterans to nourish the roots of freedom.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today to salute the selfless men and women who have sacrificed so much in order to secure and protect the freedoms that we, as Americans, enjoy today. Volunteering one's body and mind without thought of consequence in order to safeguard the ideologies our country holds dear, is the utmost act of patriotism. Today we recognize the importance of the hardships endured by our Nation's veterans to preserve peace and freedom.

As a Senator from New Mexico, I take great pride in the fact that New Mexico has among the top ten highest per capita military retiree populations in the Nation and honor the prominent contributions they have made towards the preservation of our great Nation.